

BURIALS, DEATH REGISTRATION AND WILLS HANDOUT Week

3 - 2021

Prior to 1837 there was little legislation relating to the death of an individual and the only records available are for burials which will give the date of the burial but not the date of death. However, burials took place very soon after death. There were coroner courts from the 11th Century, but these records are very hard to find as coroners were not required to keep records for any period. This applied up until recent times. Do try the local archive to see if they have these. If not, local newspapers may have reported the proceedings of the court.

From 1 July 1837, as with births and marriages, all deaths must be reported to the local registrar and are held locally and at the General Register Office. Certificates cost £11 but you can get a pdf for £7 for some years.

From 1 July 1927 still births are recorded as a birth and there does not appear to be a death record.

BURIED IN WOLLEN (woollen) ACT 1666-80

This Act required the dead, apart from plague victims, to be buried in pure English woollen shrouds to the exclusion of any foreign textiles. Apparently, sheep farmers were going through a hard time and this Act was brought in to increase the need for English Wool. It was a requirement that an affidavit be sworn in front of a Justice of the Peace (usually by a relative of the deceased or some other credible person) confirming burial in wool. There was a punishment of £5 for non-compliance. Those that could afford the fee would continue to bury in a coffin. The very poor who could not afford a woollen shroud may have the burial record marked "naked", but I have never seen this.

PARISH RECORDS PRIOR TO 1 JULY 1837

Will give the name of the person being buried and their status.

Adult male may just be recorded with their name

A married woman may be recorded as the wife of

Children may be recorded as the son/daughter of – again may only be the father but may also be the mother

Children recorded with father and mother with different surnames may have died before the parents married or parentage was decided by a court issuing a bastardy bond on the father

Some may give the age

Like other records there was no consistent way of recording death.

From 1813 a standard parish burial book was brought in and this records name; abode; when buried; age and who carried out the burial.

Information about a person who has died, either in a parish register or a death certificate is as good as the knowledge of the person giving it. Spellings of the name may be wrong as may be the age. Again these can be used as clues to take your research forward.

Non-conformists are likely to be buried in Church of England churchyards as they sometimes did not have cemeteries of their own.

Cemeteries other than church graveyards began to appear in the early 19th century and some were privately owned but many were either taken over by the local authority or they began to open their own.

From 1 July 1837 a standardise death certificate was issued and, unfortunately, I feel most of you will have seen one.

SCOTTISH DEATH CERTIFICATE

As well as the same information as on a death certificate issued in England and Wales the Scottish death certificate includes the name of the mother of the deceased person even if they are an adult.

PHOTOGRAPHS

In Victorian times it became popular to take photos the dead in their coffins or in a group photo. I have seen photos of a mother and father with living children and a dead child on the lap of the mother.

HEADSTONES

You may find examples in your family albums of photographs which have been sent from overseas. These were probably sent to assure the family that the person had received a decent burial.

If you have a photograph of poor quality but you know where the burial took place first look on the various websites that record burials. Family History Societies across the world have spent hours recorded headstones and memorials within churches and if you contact the local society where your ancestor died, they may have these records.

NEWSPAPERS

We have talked about these before but don't just look for announcement of a death some families, especially one year after the death, may put in an immemorial notice.

Obituaries about important people may appear also reports of their funerals and as mentioned before reports of a coroner's inquest may be reported.

WORKHOUSE AND OTHER INSTITUTION RECORDS

Will talk more about these later in the series but if a person dies in a workhouse then this will be recorded in the admission/ discharge register. The informant of a death certificate may be some one from the institution and not a family member. The workhouse is a place where someone frail or sick may go for care and treatment. As well as the admission/discharge register if you can get to read the Governing Board Records/Minutes which may mention something about the death. In one case I found a record of a daughter having asked for the return of her father's clothes and the committee agreed that she could collect them.

CENSUS

Does some one disappear from the Census. If the husband or wife have died then they will be shown as a widow or widower. Has a child disappeared? Remember children could go out to work at an early age so look for them on their own before looking for their death.

WILLS

Before 1858 wills might be in the National or local archive. There were 250 Church Courts dealing with wills. The National Archives has the Canterbury and Oxford records. Very early wills can be in Latin.

Early wills will certainly have a paragraph at the beginning with declarations of faith.

From 1858 you have a government body the PROBATE SERVICE which can be accessed on-line. You can search up to the present day as records are input on a daily basis.

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FUNERAL SERVICE CARDS

Can give useful information about the life of an individual.

HINTS AND TIPS

When entering the name details the surname should be entered in block capitals this enables you to distinguish it from first names especially when what looks like a surname is used as a first name.

When you find a marriage, but you don't know the bride's maiden name, you should not put in her husband's surname. Just enter her first names and continue your research until you find her maiden name.

WEBSITES

Records for the **Island of Jersey** can be found at jerripedia, theislandwiki.org – they have records up to 1940 and those in French have been translated into English.

CEMETERY RECORDS

www.brookwoodcemetery.com

www.findagrave.com www.interment.net/uk

www.iirelandcemeteryrecords.com

www.deceasedonline.com